



Leveraging Intermediaries to Expand Work-based Learning

THE STATE'S ROLE IN WORK-BASED LEARNING

As the nation's education leaders and employers seek to work together to create a well-prepared, competitive workforce, work-based learning – a strategy that has existed for decades – is back in the spotlight as an effective strategy for connecting students' classroom learning to their future careers.

With this renewed interest, the work-based learning of today is being transformed as a means to build on students' academic experience and career interests, rather than simply to release them from the school day for work that is unconnected to their education. Work-based learning can and should be available to all students regardless of whether they are enrolled in a Career Technical Education (CTE) program of study or not. What is most important is that the experience is informed by workplace standards and is connected to students' classroom learning as a means to provide context and relevancy.¹

What is Work-based Learning?

Work-based learning is an educational strategy that offers students an opportunity to reinforce and deepen their classroom learning, explore future career fields and demonstrate their skills in an authentic setting.

This series defines work-based learning as a continuum of experiences that helps prepare students for postsecondary education and careers. High-quality work-based learning should begin in the early grades with activities that help build students' awareness of possible careers. This exploration continues through middle and high school with job shadowing or mentoring to better inform students' decision making, and culminates with more intensive career preparation activities such as school-based enterprises, internships and pre-apprenticeships as students move along in their career pathway from high school to postsecondary education.¹

THE STATE'S ROLE IN SUPPORTING INTERMEDIARIES

Effectively managing work-based learning (WBL) opportunities requires many layers of coordination. At the center of such coordination is typically an intermediary, be it at the school, region or state level, whose sole or primary function is to support work-based learning or other career development activities for students. Put another way, a common element of any successful work-based learning program is that there is someone committed to coordinating that program and, in particular, managing the relationship between educators and employers. As such, there is a clear state role in supporting the existence of individual coordinators and/or intermediary organizations through funding, building formal partnerships or even tasking state-level organizations to play the role.

The *Connecting the Classroom to Careers* series takes a closer look at the state's role in expanding high-quality work-based learning opportunities for all students, with a particular focus on untangling the major barriers at the K-12 level.

Each installment will explore a specific issue and highlight innovative or leading state approaches, as well as key policy questions and relevant resources that state and local leaders should consider as they examine their own systems.

An individual serving as an intermediary (often called a coordinator and housed within a school or district) is typically responsible for recruiting new employers to participate in the full continuum of work-based learning activities, monitoring student performance during a placement on a work site and ensuring all laws are being followed. This person interfaces not only with the community, but also with educators to ensure student placements are aligned with and build upon their classroom learning. This individual can serve as a full-time coordinator or split his or her time as a classroom instructor. Many Career Technical Student Organization advisors, for example, serve as work-based learning coordinators for their students as well as classroom teachers.

A third-party organization may also serve as an intermediary, employing individuals to coordinate the activities and leverage the organization's network to increase work-based learning. Examples include an association such as a local Chamber of Commerce; a government-appointed entity such as a local workforce development board; or a non-profit organization that can link the community with the education sector.

Regardless of how they are organized or where they reside, intermediaries facilitate partnerships between educators and employers for the ultimate benefit of a student's career exploration.

KEY QUESTIONS WHEN SUPPORTING INTERMEDIARIES

Here are a number of key questions and issues to take into consideration:

Environmental Scan

- Are intermediaries – individuals or organizations – already in use at the secondary level in your state? If so, how and in what ways? Are they equally distributed across communities?
- What role do intermediaries serve in your state? How does this fit within your state's goals around work-based learning?
- Are there successful local practices that could be scaled? Are there models in other states to consider?
- Are there current practices in use at the postsecondary level that could be replicated at the secondary level?

Funding Support

- How does your state financially support the full range of work-based learning activities and experiences? Consider all available federal, state and local funding streams.
- Are any of these funding streams being used to fund intermediaries – individuals or organizations – at the local, regional and/or state level?

- Which of these funding streams include work-based learning as an allowable activity but are not being fully utilized for that purpose?

Other State Support

- Aside from funding, what state policies currently support or encourage the use of intermediaries for the full range of work-based learning activities? How do you measure the effectiveness of these policies?
- What state policies may limit or restrict the use of intermediaries for work-based learning?
- What other state-level structures and processes are in place to support intermediaries? Consider state staff, professional development, certification requirements, etc.
- Is there any existing statewide infrastructure that could be leveraged as an intermediary to increase access to high-quality work-based learning?
- How does the state monitor intermediaries to ensure work-based learning activities are of high quality? And that intermediaries are effective?

LEVERAGING A STATEWIDE INTERMEDIARY IN SOUTH CAROLINA

State-level intermediaries can go a long way towards building capacity and enabling work-based learning by facilitating employer-school partnerships, addressing key logistical challenges, and helping educational institutions and employers work through administrative details such as worker's compensation and liability. Apprenticeship Carolina™, housed within the South Carolina Technical College System, provides critical support to education institutions and employers around the state's growing Registered Youth Apprenticeships and adult Registered Apprenticeships.

THE BASICS

Apprenticeship Carolina™ was launched in 2007 to address the state's skills gap at a time when apprenticeships were not particularly popular in South Carolina. Through direct engagement with employers, and the availability of a \$1,000 tax credit for every apprentice a participating company takes on,ⁱⁱ Apprenticeship Carolina™ has served over 15,000 apprentices in over 780 Registered Apprenticeship Programs throughout the state since its launch.ⁱⁱⁱ

In 2012, Apprenticeship Carolina™ decided to take on the challenge of supporting **Registered Youth Apprenticeships**, which are geared towards high school students. As of 2016, there are over 100 youth apprenticeship programs established in more than half of the state's counties, offering students the opportunity to complete courses required for high school graduation; participate in paid, on-the-job training; earn postsecondary credit; and earn a credential from the U.S. Department of Labor. Just like the state's adult apprenticeship initiative, the youth apprenticeship model has begun to move from the traditional industries such as construction and manufacturing into emerging sectors such as information technology, hospitality and tourism, and health care.

Funding for Apprenticeship Carolina™ is provided by the state, including the \$1,000 tax credit that is available to South Carolina companies for up to four years based on the length of the apprenticeship.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Perhaps the most important role Apprenticeship Carolina™ plays is that of a "concierge," providing extensive technical assistance to employers and education institutions. A team of six consultants (one of whom is dedicated to youth apprenticeships) travels across the state to engage directly with employers, facilitate meetings between employers and education institutions to establish programs, and work with companies to develop the three components of an apprenticeship program: on-the-job training, job-related education and a scalable wage progression.

The [Apprenticeship Carolina™ website](#) is designed to encourage employers to get involved and connected with their regional apprenticeship coordinator. Apprenticeship Carolina™ positions itself as helping employers by:

- Informing them about the registered apprenticeship training model;
- Identifying existing models or approaches based on the employers' occupations of interest or need;
- Connecting or providing employers with appropriate resources to assist with their program;
- Drafting competencies/standards and training and education outlines;
- Submitting the registration paperwork to the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) for full recognition in the National Registered Apprenticeship System; and
- Assisting employers with program updates as their workforce needs evolve.

Apprenticeship Carolina™ has built a lot of trust with employers, resulting in them taking on increasing numbers of apprentices and even moving into the youth apprenticeship space. For youth apprenticeships in particular, some

employers need additional support to understand the legal and liability issues associated with hiring individuals under 18 (which are largely [misconstrued](#)) as well as assistance in identifying the list of competencies students need to meet to complete the program.

Critically, the support Apprenticeship Carolina™ offers is at no cost to employers and is viewed by employers as a mitigating factor in their involvement. According to one human resources manager who has youth apprentices placed at her hotel, the program would not have been successful without the assistance of Apprenticeship Carolina™.

SUPPORTING LOCAL INTERMEDIARIES IN GEORGIA

It is not uncommon for states to support in-school and district-level intermediaries, such as work-based learning coordinators or career development specialists, although these positions are often funded at the district or institutional level rather than through a dedicated state funding stream. When states invest in local intermediaries, they can help ensure more stability and sustainability – as well as protect such intermediaries from “scope creep,” or taking on other responsibilities beyond coordinating work-based learning for students.

Georgia has a robust state-supported system of work-based learning, with dedicated funding streams, technical assistance and infrastructure to support four specific work-based learning placements: Youth Apprenticeship, Cooperative Education, Internship and Employability Skills Development. In total, approximately 14,000 juniors and seniors participate in at least one of these experiences, all of which are counted as a full course towards graduation and a CTE program of study.

FUNDING WORK-BASED LEARNING COORDINATORS

The state’s work-based learning coordinators are supported by state funding in two different, but critical ways. For one, the state’s Youth Apprenticeship Program^{iv} (YAP) is funded partially by a competitive state grant. Local boards of education or apprenticeship consortia

Other Intermediary Structures

- **Business/industry associations**
The San Antonio Chamber of Commerce launched [San Antonio Works](#) (SA Works), an industry-led, experiential learning program. The website serves as a portal where employers, students and educators can register to participate. SA Works also provides technical assistance, resources and tools to support Career Cluster-based matches.
- **Regional workforce investment boards**
Massachusetts’ [Connecting Activities](#), the statewide effort to provide career development experiences for students, is coordinated through the Commonwealth’s 16 regional workforce investment boards (WIBs). State-funded WIB staff link employers with schools and students to facilitate work-based learning placements, career exposure activities and teacher externships.
- **Postsecondary institutions**
Iowa has created an [Intermediary Network](#) of 15 community colleges, each of which is tasked with coordinating work-based learning opportunities between employers and K-12 schools in a specific region of the state. The colleges are charged with supporting high school students in making more informed choices once they leave high school. With an annual expenditure of \$1.45 million, the Network supported work-based learning placements for over 15,000 students and externships to nearly 800 educators [in 2015](#).
- **Foundations/non-profit organizations**
Through PENCIL Partners, the PENCIL Foundation recruits and connects over 800 community and business partners with the Metro Nashville Public Schools, including almost 325 partners who worked directly with Nashville’s career academies. PENCIL coordinates the partnerships and is the established main point of contact for both employers and schools, reducing confusion and multiple asks in a district with wall-to-wall academies. [In 2015](#), the Academy PENCIL Partners donated more than \$1.6 million in community investment.

can apply annually for funding from a \$3.5 million grant program to establish and administer YAP. The grant program is not mandated by legislation, but has been included as a state budget line item every year for the past 20 years. Recipients are required to spend at least 85 percent of these funds on the YAP coordinator.

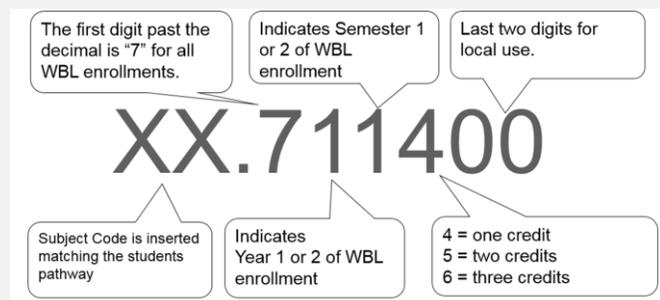
While this competitive grant program is focused on YAP coordinators, districts may leverage the YAP coordinator to support the full range of work-based learning activities. With grants ranging from \$9,000-40,000 (and an average grant award of \$20,000), the competitive funds may cover the cost of anywhere between one quarter-time and one full-time YAP coordinator, based on the size of the district and number of students served. As a result, smaller districts likely need to use other funding to support a full-time coordinator and larger districts need to hire additional coordinators to support their full student population.

Georgia also provides state-level funding for work-based learning coordinators through its school funding formula. Youth Apprenticeship, Cooperative Education, Internship and Employability Skills Development are all state-approved Career Technical and Agriculture Education (CTAE) courses with standardized course codes. As Georgia provides funding to schools based on the full-time enrollment (FTE) of students, if enough students enroll in a work-based learning course, the school receives funds accordingly. All CTAE courses – including the work-based learning placements – receive a heavier FTE weight (and therefore more funds) than most other courses due to additional expenses, such as equipment costs. In other words, the work-based learning course is treated like any other course offered by a school and is funded as such, including funding for a teacher, or, in this case, a work-based learning coordinator.

Georgia Work-Based Learning Categories

- **Youth Apprenticeship** – Placement requires completion of one unit of related instruction; must include a post-secondary training component; 720 hours of on-the-job training; for high wage, high skill, high demand jobs
- **Internship** – Placement requires completion of one unit of related instruction; may be paid or unpaid
- **Cooperative Education** – Must be concurrently enrolled in the related CTAE course; must be a paid job
- **Employability Skill Development** – Student is taking or has taken a CTAE course; must be a paid job; training plan based on application of identified employability skills (*new*)

Georgia Work-Based Learning Course Coding



BUILDING PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY FOR WORK-BASED LEARNING COORDINATORS

Beyond financial support, Georgia also provides a range of unique opportunities and supports for work-based learning coordinators to set them up for success.

All work-based learning coordinators are required to be a certified CTAE instructor or have a state-approved endorsement. The endorsement is offered by a Regional Service Agency for credit that is applied toward a teaching credential from the state's Professional Standards Commission. The endorsement consists of three courses, one of which is satisfied by a year-long internship.

To ensure work-based learning coordinators remain trained and aware of any new or revised state policies, the State Board of Education recently updated their regulations and now require work-based learning

coordinators to go through training every five years.^y This is largely developed and supported training through the [CTAE Resource Network](#), an entity that is operated by the Georgia Department of Education, led by a rotating board of local CTAE directors and funded by a dedicated portion of local staff development funds. The Resource Network facilitates adequate training for all work-based learning coordinators and CTAE teachers, even if they are in a smaller district with more limited staff development funds.

In addition, the state has put in place structures and programs that empower work-based learning coordinators to learn from one another, hold leadership positions and influence state-level decisions. Specifically, the state has created six work-based learning regions through which participating work-based learning coordinators identify, organize and deliver professional development. The regions are required to hold at least three meetings each year, to be hosted by a local employer.

The chairs and vice chairs of those six regions also sit on a state-level WBL/YAP Executive Board, along with elected officers, a Georgia-Association for Career and Technical Education (GACTE) representative and the full-time work-based learning program manager at the Georgia Department of Education. This Executive Board plans statewide professional development activities, such as sessions at the summer CTAE conference; provides feedback on state-level policies, such as the recently passed [HB402](#), which offers a discount on workers' compensation insurance premiums to employers who hire students age 16 and older; discusses regional challenges; and shares best practices. The state cites the regions and state Executive Board as being critical to work-based learning coordinators' leadership development and statewide sustainability for WBL activities.

Finally, the state in partnership with GACTE has created an [annual award program](#) recognizing exceptional WBL/YAP coordinators and YAP completers. Selected work-based learning coordinators must have outstanding business partners, develop innovative work-based learning opportunities or employability skill lessons, or engage in successful marketing efforts. Each year, the state lifts up the most creative, innovative and successful WBL/YAP coordinators, sending a clear signal of what quality looks like to the CTAE community and other work-based learning coordinators.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Work-based learning coordinators need to be bilingual – able to speak the language of employers and educators and translate across the systems so that the classroom and workplace are truly connected.
- Work-based learning coordinators can be more effective when they are supported in multiple ways by their states and districts. Rather than just providing funding, states can provide training, ongoing professional development, legal and liability assistance and regional coordination.
- A network of work-based learning practitioners can be critical to a state's sustainability efforts. Such a network where local leaders share effective practices and have opportunities to inform state-level decisions can help ensure work-based learning remains a priority in communities across the state.
- States should consider supporting a full-time coordinator within the state department of education to manage all work-based learning or career development activities and serve as a key point of contact for districts and industry partners. Just as it can be challenging for a school-based coordinator to ensure access to quality work-based learning experiences for students if he or she has other responsibilities to handle, it can also be difficult for a state agency to maintain focus without a staff member dedicated to supporting work-based learning.

RESOURCES

- Youth Apprenticeship Carolina [Quick Facts](#)
- Apprenticeship Carolina's [Tax Credit Form](#)
- Georgia's Work-based Learning [website](#), [blog](#) and [manual](#)
- Georgia's Work-based Learning [Standards/Rubric](#)
- Iowa's Intermediary Network [website](#) and [annual report](#)
- U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Youth Employment Network [Talent Orchestrators: Scaling Youth Employment Through Business-Facing Intermediaries](#)
- [Michigan Career Placement Association](#), a statewide professional association for work-based learning coordinators, supported with annual funding by the Department of Education
- Utah's Work-based Learning Coordinator Endorsement [application and requirements](#)
- Tennessee's Work-based Learning Certification and Professional Development [overview](#)

Acknowledgments

Advance CTE would like to give special thanks to Dwayne Hobbs, Program Manager/Work-Based Learning Specialist at the Georgia Department of Education, and Carla Whitlock, Senior Apprenticeship Consultant at Apprenticeship Carolina™, for their input and feedback throughout the development of this brief.

"Leveraging Intermediaries to Expand Work-Based Learning" was developed through the New Skills for Youth Initiative, and would not have been possible without support from JPMorgan Chase & Co and the Council of Chief State School Officers.

ⁱ Darche, S. et al. (2009). "Work-based Learning in California: Opportunities and Models for Expansion."

<http://www.connectedcalifornia.org/downloads/WBLReport.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Apprenticeship Carolina's tax credit form: <http://www.apprenticeshipcarolina.com/downloads/Apprenticeship-Tax-Credit-Form.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.apprenticeshipcarolina.com/by-the-numbers.html>

^{iv} For clarification, Georgia's YAP is not exactly like South Carolina's youth apprenticeship program in that it is not connected to the state's Registered Apprenticeship system and does not require any registration with the USDOL.

^v Georgia's Board of Education regulations for work-based learning: <http://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/State-Board-of-Education/SBOE%20Rules/160-4-3-.14.pdf>